

The Cwricwlwm Cymreig, history and the story of Wales

Final report

'Distinctiveness in an education structure is no virtue of itself; it is worth fighting for only if it enriches the educational experience of pupils.'^{*}

^{*} Gareth Elwyn Jones and Gordon Wynne Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales* (University of Wales Press, 2003, page 211).

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Introduction

The development of the national curriculum and Cwricwlwm Cymreig

The national curriculum of Wales today is the outcome of the Education Reform Act of 1988. Before this, although there were defined study areas for each examination subject, there were no compulsory curriculum Orders for learners under 14 years old. There were only two compulsory subjects, namely religious education and physical education. Welsh was also compulsory in some parts of Wales, but did not have to be taught at all in others. Otherwise each individual school had the freedom to choose the subjects to be taught as well as the aspects of these and the methods of presenting them to their learners.

Although this freedom allowed good teachers to devise learning experiences which were relevant to their learners and reflected the latest developments in the subject, it also meant that there were wide variations in the standard of education across the country. Although there were many reasons for the decision to introduce a national curriculum in 1988, concern about this variation was one reason for doing so.

The Cwricwlwm Cymreig

The original intention was to establish a common national curriculum for Wales and England. Wales and England had been one country for centuries, both constitutionally and in practice, and they shared a common education system. After considerable campaigning, it was agreed that some subjects, such as history and geography, would have different programmes of study. The Association of History Teachers in Wales took a leading part in this campaign to ensure a distinctive curriculum in Wales. Other subjects, such as mathematics and science, would have a core curriculum in common. During the process of developing the national curricula, there was close cooperation between the Curriculum Councils in Wales and England, and between the subject committees in all subjects, in order to ensure consistency between the two curricula.

The aim of the campaigning for a separate curriculum was to secure a national curriculum for Wales which would reflect the culture, environment, economy and history of Wales, and the influences which have shaped the country of today. A need for further guidance on this was perceived by ACAC¹, which in 1993 published guidance on *Developing the Curriculum*

¹ Awdurdod Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (ACAC: the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales), successor body to the Curriculum Council for Wales (CCW), which developed the original curriculum. This later became ACCAC: Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (the Qualifications, Curriculum, and Assessment Authority) before being absorbed into the Education and Skills Department of the Welsh Government in 2006. For a comprehensive and informed account of the process of developing the national curriculum in Wales and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, see *A History of Education in Wales* (2003), pages 198–214. Emeritus Professor Gareth Elwyn Jones was a member of both the Welsh and English committees which developed the original programmes of study for history.

*Cymreig*², following that with further guidance and advice as the curriculum was reviewed³. It remains the case however that while other countries simply have one national curriculum, Wales has a statutory national curriculum and an additional document which is also statutory.

One outcome of devolution in 1999 was the development of an increasingly independent education system in Wales. The original intention was to review the national curriculum every five years. Whilst this did not happen, there were reviews in 1995–6, 2000 and 2008.

The Minister for Education and Skills announced a further review in October 2012, one key purpose of which was to consider the impact of the new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework and tests on existing curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales. As part of this wider review, the Minister has set up this task and finish group to look specifically at the teaching of Welsh history, the story(ies) of Wales and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig.

The task group began its work at the beginning of November, and published an interim report at the end of April 2013. A public consultation on this report was held until 21 June. Details of the consultation process are to be found in Appendix 2. A significant majority of positive responses were received both to the report and to its recommendations, and these are reflected in this final version of the report, including the clear demand for a new curriculum for twenty-first century Wales.

This report was presented to the Minister in July 2013, and the first phase of the wider review completed by September. This included evidence gathering, consultation with key stakeholders and experts, and analysis, all of which culminated in a final report to the Minister in September. The work of this task and finish group formed part of this phase, and helped to inform the final report.

The second phase of the review will be completed by September 2014. This will include identification of any revisions to the current assessment and curriculum arrangements in Wales, informed by public consultation. Implementation is expected to take place from September 2014.

In addition, the Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales was published in November 2012. The Welsh Government announced its broad acceptance of all the recommendations of the review at the end of January 2013. This means, amongst other things, that GCSEs and A levels will be

² The adjective *Cymreig* means 'pertaining to Wales or the Welsh; pertaining to the Welsh language, that is in terms of geography, the economy or culture, and should be differentiated from the adjective *Cymraeg*, which refers more specifically to the Welsh language' (definitions drawn from *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru: A Dictionary of the Welsh Language*, Cardiff 1950–2002).

³ See Kevin Smith 'A Critical Discourse Analysis of Developing the Curriculum Cymreig: the Language of Learning Welshness' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Miami, 2010) for a perceptive analysis of the process of developing the Curriculum Cymreig, and of the 2003 guidance in particular.

retained in Wales within the framework of a revised, more rigorous Welsh Baccalaureate. This will sometimes mean diverging from England and the rest of the UK, but many qualifications will continue to be shared. There will also be clear pathways for progression through the medium of Welsh.

Learning and teaching resources

There was a demand for resources to support the new national curriculum, and it was decided that the government should commission publishers to produce resources in English and Welsh for those subjects which had a separate Welsh programme of study, and Welsh versions of resources for subjects which had the same programme of study in Wales and England. A panel of classroom teachers would meet annually to decide what were the resource priorities in each curriculum subject. The market for these resources was too small to make them commercially attractive without government subsidy.

The first history resources for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 were published in 1996⁴, for example, and since then appropriate resources have regularly been published for every curriculum subject.

Previously, the lack of teaching resources suitable for schools in Wales had been a matter of concern for many years. Teachers had either to use resources developed for England, adapting and/or translating them as needed, or use resources produced by publishers in Wales, which might or might not be suitable for their own scheme of work. For commercial reasons, the resources published in Wales were not always as attractive as those produced in England, and it seems likely that the poor quality of some Welsh history resources affected the learning experience.

The Welsh Books Council, together with the publishers, is responsible for advertising and marketing the resources commissioned for the curriculum in Wales. The Council's schools' officers regularly visit schools across Wales, undertaking about 700 visits every year. Nevertheless, despite this, teachers continue to refer to a shortage of suitable resources.

⁴ *Welsh History Stories/Storïau Hanes Cymru* (Cardiff) for Key Stages 1 and 2, and *Focus on Welsh History/Ffocws ar Hanes Cymru* (Aberystwyth) for Key Stage 3.

1. The Cwricwlwm Cymreig

Should the Cwricwlwm Cymreig best be delivered in future through the discipline of history and, if not, what are the best means of ensuring that the elements of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig are delivered across the curriculum?

At present the statutory expectation is that learners aged 7 to 14 should be given opportunities in all curriculum subjects to develop and apply their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales. Learners aged 14 to 19 should have opportunities for active engagement in understanding the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of Wales as a part of the world as a whole. For learners aged 14 to 19, this is part of their Learning Core entitlement and is a requirement at Key Stage 4.

History is seen as contributing to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig by making local and Welsh history a focus of the study and helping learners to understand the factors that have shaped Wales and other countries today.

Similar statements about the contributions of other subjects to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig are provided in the section 'Learning across the curriculum' in the introduction to their programmes of study.

Question 1: Should the Cwricwlwm Cymreig be delivered in future through the discipline of history?

The **Cwricwlwm Cymreig should not be delivered through the discipline of history alone**. The task group was unanimous in its belief that to do so would be damaging to the concept of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig itself, to the discipline of history, and also to the other curriculum subjects.

The group did not perceive there to be any advantages to delivering the Cwricwlwm Cymreig through history. Every subject provides opportunities for learners to develop their understanding of Wales, and **the Cwricwlwm Cymreig should not focus on the past only: it should be a means of helping the present and future citizens of Wales to understand their world**.

The task group was of the opinion that there would be the following disadvantages to delivering the Cwricwlwm Cymreig through history. It would:

- be likely to deprive other subjects of their contribution to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, since there is far more to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig than history alone
- make it more difficult for schools to place a stronger focus on taking an active approach to learning through art, technology and science in a local and contemporary context
- narrow the History Programme of Study too much, and tend to make it narrow and parochial

- lead to content overload of the programme of study, endangering the skills focus
- be open to being interpreted as an attempt to turn the study of history into nationalist propaganda
- mean that learners' interest in the Cwricwlwm Cymreig would be entirely dependent on their interest in history as a subject – if history had no appeal for them, there would be no other opportunity to kindle their interest in the Cwricwlwm Cymreig
- likely to lead learners to associate Welshness only with the past
- be impractical, given the limited time available for the teaching of history, and the optional nature of history from Key Stage 4 onwards
- place the responsibility for developing the Cwricwlwm Cymreig on individual teachers, whereas it should be the school's collective responsibility.

The task group was of the opinion that there were examples of good practice in integrating the Cwricwlwm Cymreig into subjects across the curriculum, but that there are wide variations in schools' attitudes towards the Cwricwlwm Cymreig⁵. Not all schools understand the requirement that the Cwricwlwm Cymreig be relevant and meaningful to learners. While some schools are successful in giving a Welsh dimension to every subject, and do so in a way which is appropriate, integrated into the subject and the topic being investigated, many schools:

- limit it to some subjects only, for example Welsh as a subject, expressive arts (such as music and art) and history
- treat it as an addition to the 'real' programme of study, first devising their schemes of work, and then adding elements of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig afterwards.

Members from the primary sector thought that the present tendency towards a thematic approach, rather than a subject-based approach, provided more opportunities for effective development of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, and they were more confident that it was being effectively delivered in their sector. Nevertheless, the tendency in some schools is to focus more on the local and the Welsh, possibly at the expense of the links between Wales and the world. There is not much evidence either that schools place their local studies in a wider Welsh context.

⁵ This comment is chiefly based on the impressions of those members of the task group who currently work with a number of different schools, as local advisors, or in museums and universities. It was supported by teacher members of the task group, on the basis of their own experience in different schools and discussions with colleagues. The most recent Estyn survey of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig was published in 2006 (*Cwricwlwm Cymreig: Phase 2*) and gives a comprehensive overview of the situation then, based on school reports for the academic years 2003/4 and 2005/6 and on visits during 2005/6 to a small number of secondary schools and one special school. Its conclusions (page 3) were that while teaching was good or better in three-quarters of schools, learners' knowledge of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig had shortcomings in about a quarter of all schools in Wales, and in some of these the work was of a low standard.

Members from the secondary sector expressed concern that the current trends in some secondary schools towards:

- reducing the time allocated to history in the school timetable
- and/or teaching it through integrated humanities courses
- and/or teaching it as part of a 'carousel' of humanities subjects
- and/or compressing the Key Stage 3 programme of study into years 7 and 8
- and/or starting to teach GCSE subjects in Year 9

all had the practical result of reducing the time available to deliver the current programme of study in history, quite apart from the Cwricwlwm Cymreig.

Members from the higher education sector were anxious that we consider the effect of any changes on those students following GCSE and AS/A level courses at colleges for further education.

Question 2: If it is decided that the Cwricwlwm Cymreig should not be delivered through the discipline of history alone, what would be the best means of ensuring that the elements of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig are delivered across the curriculum?

The group felt that the Welsh dimension should be integrated into every subject, where that is relevant and meaningful. The current definitions are a good starting point in this respect, although they could be developed further.

A recent book on mathematics⁶ gives clear examples of how this may be done in subjects such as mathematics which share a core programme of study with schools in England. The author says in his introduction 'The Welsh experience of counting must be understood in order to understand our contemporary attitude to numbers.'⁷ The book includes a discussion on mathematical principles and puzzles, putting these in a Welsh context by, for example, analysing the reasons for the different ways of counting in Welsh.

The aim in every subject should be to integrate the essentials of the subject with the Welsh perspective⁸ in order to meet the demands of the twenty-first century, where that enhances both an understanding of the subject itself and of Wales. It need not be artificial or irrelevant, and should provide opportunities for active learning through direct experience. No one should be trying to put a Welsh hat on the Mona Lisa. But nor should an understanding of wider trends, concepts and events be divorced from their relevance to Wales. The principles which inform the New Zealand Curriculum provide an interesting example of an approach which might be taken⁹.

⁶ Gareth Ffowc Roberts, *Mae Pawb yn Cyfrif: stori ryfeddol y Cymry a'u rhifau* ('Everyone counts: the wonderful story of the Welsh and their numbers'; Llandysul, 2012). Author's translation of title and quotation.

⁷ Page 15.

⁸ In referring to the 'Welsh perspective' (or 'Welsh dimension'), the panel would not wish to suggest that there is only one such perspective. There is a range of perspectives in every subject.

⁹ <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-documents/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum/Principles>

The task group was of the opinion that teachers' understanding of the implications of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig needed to be improved across all age and ability sectors, and across all subjects. It should help learners to develop their investigative skills in all subjects, giving them opportunities to learn actively, developing their knowledge, skills and understanding through activities and experiences rather than passively receiving information.

Restricting the Cwricwlwm Cymreig to some subjects alone would:

- restrict learners' experiences
- limit the opportunities for teachers to teach their subjects from a Welsh standpoint
- reduce the potential of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig to contribute to innovative teaching methods relevant to twenty-first century learners
- reinforce the impression that the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is something peripheral or additional
- downgrade the Welsh dimension of the national curriculum in the long term.

Every curriculum or scheme of work has the potential to become restrictively conservative if it does not develop with the passage of time and with changes in society. There have been great social changes since the national curriculum was first drawn up a quarter of a century ago. Devolution has been one of the most obvious, but not the only change in the course of these years. We should take this opportunity to look afresh at every curriculum subject, with the intention of reviewing them to meet the needs of twenty-first century society and post-devolution Wales.

The term 'Cwricwlwm Cymreig' is a stumbling block in itself, in the opinion of the task group. It is not a curriculum in itself, but an aspect of the national curriculum. The word 'Cymreig' also causes difficulty, since the difference in meaning between 'Cymreig' and 'Cymraeg' is not clear to everyone, especially to those who do not speak Welsh.

The task group considered the possibility of recommending that the name be changed, in order to:

- avoid the ambiguity of the current title
- make the wider context more explicit.

A name such as 'Wales and the World' would:

- strengthen the continuity from Key Stages 2 and 3 to Key Stages 4 and 5
- emphasise that basing the learners' experiences on their own area is not parochial or narrow, as there is an expectation that an integrated Cwricwlwm Cymreig will also extend their horizons.

However, the task group finally decided that a change of name would not resolve the issue, or help to achieve the original aim of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig: a fully Welsh curriculum which integrates both a Welsh dimension and an international perspective into the learning and teaching of every

subject. The present review of the national curriculum in Wales is an ideal opportunity to do this. To do so would remove the problem of an additional and detachable layer of 'Welshness', and the danger of adding another new initiative from the Government to a timetable which is already full.

However, such integration could endanger the Welsh dimension if that is not already firmly established in the school's ethos. Teachers will need a clear vision and leadership, as well as continuing training in order to ensure that the principles, the practice and the resources are all familiar to them.

The task group is of the opinion that the next national curriculum in Wales should take as its starting point the ideas and ideals of the present Cwricwlwm Cymreig. Its aim should be to build on these to create an entirely holistic national curriculum for twenty-first century Wales, one which will have both a Welsh dimension and an international perspective. There should be no further reference to a 'national curriculum' and a 'Cwricwlwm Cymreig', but to one 'curriculum for Wales'.

The developers of this new curriculum should work closely with working groups of specialists in each subject from all sectors of education, in order to profit from both academic and practical expertise. The aims of these specialist working groups would be:

- to agree on clearer and more detailed definitions of the Welsh perspective in that subject
- to be available to offer expert and practical support to the consortia and to the professional learning communities, as they develop
- to support teachers in recognising the ethos of their communities, and how they can develop schemes of work, learning activities and relevant teaching resources which will both belong to each community and promote good practice in each subject.

They should also develop benchmarks for each subject which would help teachers to decide whether the Welsh dimension:

- is a natural, meaningful and organic aspect of the topic they are investigating
- emphasises active learning through experience and investigation
- provides opportunities for learners to form their own opinions
- offers a range of images of Welshness and opportunities to compare these
- helps learners to understand and challenge stereotypes
- extends the learners' horizons as well as giving them roots in their own culture¹⁰
- takes into account the learners' own cultural and linguistic background and the communities to which they belong
- provides opportunities to debate or challenge the content.

¹⁰ This should reflect the diversity of experience and culture in Wales both today and in the past.

Establishing such a committee for every subject might also help to address one of the weaknesses of the current education system: the lack of continuity and progression from one key stage to the next, which is particularly evident at transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and in the foundation subjects.

The members of these committees should be aware of the pressures of work on teachers and on school resources, and work with the communities and with the teachers seconded to Hwb to provide clear and practical advice on how existing schemes of work and resources may be used as a basis for the new developments. One of their priorities should be on the potential of integrating the Welsh dimension to reduce teachers' workload by offering opportunities to avoid repetition and unnecessary work, but they should also take responsibility for assuring the quality of the resources on Hwb and Hwb+.

There is also a pressing need for a better way of collecting and sharing current good practice in developing the present Cwricwlwm Cymreig, and the task group suggest that in advance of the introduction of the new curriculum:

- Estyn should include such examples on the 'Good Practice' section of their website
- Hwb and the Hwb+ Learning Platform should establish a national forum to share:
 - training materials
 - a range of appropriate digital resources in English and Welsh to support teaching the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, regularly reviewing and updating these
 - more informal examples of good practice than those provided by Estyn, such as the work of the winners of the Welsh Heritage Schools' Initiative's annual competition
 - subject discussions across sectors.

This should be supported by a regular electronic newsletter to schools and other interested bodies. The quality of all Hwb resources should also be assured, and updated regularly. All these steps would help to establish a firm foundation for the development of the new national curriculum.

Substantial investment will be needed in in-service training for every teacher in every subject, in initial teacher training, in training for newly qualified teachers and in classroom and online resources. The needs of teachers moving to Wales from other countries should also be taken into consideration. The development of professional learning communities and of Hwb provide opportunities to ensure that everyone can both profit from and contribute to these new developments in the curriculum.

The specifications for all qualification, offered in Wales should be reviewed to establish how the Welsh perspective is ensured in them. Changes to qualifications in Wales following the review of 14–19 Qualifications, discussed in the introduction to this report, provide an opportunity to do this now.

In the past, for example, it was made compulsory for all History GCSE and AS/A Level specifications to include a percentage of British history. While something similar could be done in order to ensure a Welsh perspective, artificial and irrelevant changes should be avoided. Consequently, specialists from the higher and further education sectors and from professional bodies should be consulted, in order to support the maintenance of rigour, and to ensure that the Welsh dimension is integral to the knowledge, skills and understanding being developed. Such changes should not be confined to academic subjects only. The increasing emphasis currently being placed on sustainability, the use of local resources and local produce suggests a practical approach to ensuring the Welsh dimension.

In all instances, the revised specifications should make explicit links with the 'Wales, Europe and the World' theme in the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Recommendations

- 1. The next national curriculum for Wales should take as its starting point the ideas and ideals embodied in the current Cwricwlwm Cymreig and build upon these as the foundation of the next National Curriculum for Wales rather than as an addition to it. It should have a Welsh dimension and an international perspective.**
- 2. The developers of the new curriculum should work closely with working groups of specialists in each subject from all sectors of education, in order to agree on clearer and more detailed definitions of the Welsh perspective in that subject. This should be the starting point in the development of the new curriculum.**
- 3. A set of benchmarks should be developed to help teachers and others ensure that the Welsh dimension is incorporated into each subject in a meaningful way.**
- 4. A more effective method should be developed of gathering and sharing examples of current good practice in the development of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig across Wales.**
- 5. Substantial investment will be needed in in-service training for every teacher in every subject, in initial teacher training, in training for newly qualified teachers and in classroom and online resources.**
- 6. It should be compulsory for every qualification offered in Wales to reflect a Welsh perspective where appropriate.**

2. The emphasis on Welsh history and the story(ies) of Wales in the teaching of history and the current programme of study

Introduction

Historical background

The freedom teachers had before the establishment of the national curriculum¹¹ allowed them to teach a subject like history from a Welsh perspective, and/or to include a strong element of local history in their schemes of work, if they chose to do so. It also allowed them to ignore Welsh and/or local history entirely, and to teach the history of any other country, if they so chose. Although there was never any obligation to do so, many teachers chose to teach a form of British history that was almost entirely dominated by England.

The influence of this belief that the history of England is the only ‘proper’ history is still to be seen in the custom of referring to the history of Wales as a subject distinct from history itself. The history of the state, and thus of England, is the official history, namely, the history taught in the country’s schools since the public education system developed in the Victorian era. This did not have to mean a complete absence of Welsh history in schools. Given that Wales had been a part of England, practically and constitutionally, for so many centuries, it follows that Welsh history had to be studied in the wider context of English history. However, when added to a historic lack of confidence in Welsh national identity, too often Anglocentric British history became the only kind of history taught. Rather than interpret Wales within a British context, Wales was often simply just left out of the history taught in schools.

This pattern has proved difficult to break. The programme of study for history has from its inception given appropriate attention to local and Welsh history, and good practice also indicates starting with the local and the familiar, developing into consideration of the unfamiliar and the wider world. Nevertheless, the panel’s experience suggests that many learners in Wales learn far more about the history of England than that of their own area and country. The task group also believe that not enough attention is paid to the other countries of Britain, and that there is also a tendency to concentrate on a narrow range of topics in the history of Europe and the world.

When the national curriculum was developed in 1989, the opening statement of the Preliminary Advice on History read:

We believe that the overriding purpose of history in the school curriculum is to provide pupils, through the acquisition of historical knowledge, with a map of the past. This will help them to understand

¹¹ See the first section of this report.

the inheritance and identity of their own society, and those of other societies.¹²

The task group maintains that these words continue to define the role of history in the school curriculum in Wales. It believes that the stories of Wales should be at the heart of any history course at every level in Wales. They should not be treated as something to be attached to the history of England, when relevant to that history. They should not either be added to a course devised for other countries. **Wales is the home of its learners, and a map of their past should be as familiar to them as the way home from school.**

There is a continuing debate about the nature and content of many national history curricula, with particular reference to the tendency to emphasise the positive aspects of that country's history. In practice however, the history curriculum of every country focuses on the history of that country. In a review of a number of different history curricula, from Greece and Turkey to the US and UK [sic], Mark Donnelly and Claire Norton say '...the history curriculum of a country focuses almost exclusively on the history of that state'¹³. They think that this is because '...the history taught in schools plays an integral part in the dissemination and reinforcement of national identities. It provides students with a sense of self, an idea of where they came from, and of the values of their nation'¹⁴.

So the history taught in schools in Wales developed over the century before the national curriculum was developed. As outlined above, the history of England was the focus of that history, in schools in England and Wales alike, because Wales had no independent educational system or constitutional status during that period. It was necessary to campaign for a programme of study for history in Wales different from that of England. Although that campaign was successful, the influence of the old focus on the history of England appears still to be strong in schools in Wales. This undermines the aims of the current programme of study, with its emphasis on the centrality of the history of Wales within a wider context.

This may be compared with the current curriculum in Scotland, where the history of the country is central to the course of study, but set in a wider context, and international influences are recognised¹⁵. The task group would not want to replace the current programme of study for history with a 'programme of study for Welsh history', but wants to see the diet of what is learnt and taught in schools rebalanced to make the centrality of the Welsh element more visible. It would also want to include some topics which help students understand the context of Wales in the modern world which might be lacking from a more Anglocentric list of topics.

¹² National Curriculum History Committee for Wales, *Preliminary Advice to the Secretary of State for Wales* (Welsh Office, June 1989), page 5.

¹³ M. Donnelly and C. Norton, *Doing History* (Abingdon, 2011), page 125.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/studyingScotland/about.asp>

The task group would wish to emphasise that it does not oppose the teaching of the history of England as such. To understand the history of Wales, it is necessary to understand its historical context, namely the immense influence of England over many centuries on Wales and the other nations of Britain. The task group's concern is that the development of the whole British state is explained from an English perspective only. This does not help learners 'to understand the inheritance and identity of their own society, and those of other societies'¹⁶ except that of England.

Much of the debate on the history taught in school tends to emphasise the factual content of the curriculum. There is, however, far more to the discipline of history than chronology and factual knowledge alone. While chronology and factual knowledge provide a framework for understanding the past and the relationship of different periods, developments and individual actions, history also provides opportunities to develop an understanding of:

- cause and effect
- the importance of evidence
- the role of standpoints and of bias in the process of creating interpretations of history
- the significance of historic events, changes and individuals.

It also provides opportunities to develop the skills of:

- historical enquiry
- using a range of sources
- evaluating evidence
- analytical thinking
- making historical comparisons and connections
- preparing and presenting an argument or account
- evaluating an argument or account.

One of the most important aspects of the discipline of history is the opportunity it provides of understanding that every narrative or historical argument is open to criticism, and that every historical judgement is provisional. **There is no one history: every individual has their own experience, and their own unique perspective on the past.** We should perhaps always refer to teaching different versions of history, or 'histories', rather than history in the singular. Realising this is a means of accepting and respecting different versions of history, while evaluating them against more objective criteria than our personal knowledge of the past, or a familiar version of it.

Effective history teaching can help to develop the active citizens of the future. It can enable learners to understand their own history, and the way in which the past has formed the present, but, more importantly, it can help them to investigate that history, and evaluate different versions of it. It can equip every citizen to deal effectively with all kinds of propaganda.

¹⁶ See note 12.

Learning and teaching

Once again, the opinion of the task group as a whole was that **there are wide variations in the approach taken to teaching Welsh history in the schools of Wales at present.**

- There are variations between the primary and secondary sectors and also between individual schools in the same sector¹⁷.
- Many schools still appear to be influenced by the Anglocentric history commonly taught before the introduction of the national curriculum.
- In other cases, the prevalence of examples from the English curriculum seems to have had a strong influence on both the choice of topics, and the focus within those topics.
- The tendency in primary schools is to emphasise the local dimension to history when presenting Welsh history. Local history is not so evident in the schemes of work in secondary schools, however, and the attention given to Welsh history also varies.
- Local history is rarely linked to the wider context in either sector.
- Few schools provide opportunities for learners to investigate different perspectives on Welsh history¹⁸.

Consequently, many learners are deprived of knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to them when they try to connect with the history of their locality and that of Wales itself.

It must be remembered too that history is optional at Key Stages 4 and 5, at the precise time when learners' intellectual development enables them to understand complex concepts and to think in more abstract terms. This is also the time when they are developing as young citizens. History is a compulsory subject for this age range in many other countries in the European Community. The original intention in developing the national curriculum was that history be a compulsory subject at Key Stage 4. The task group is of the opinion that consideration should be given to revisiting this idea, perhaps initially by strengthening the historical element in the Welsh Baccalaureate. Giving up history at the age of 14 does not help the young people of Wales to understand history better. Increasing the element of history in the Welsh Baccalaureate would give learners an opportunity to develop their historical understanding and skills at an age-appropriate stage in their education, and to apply them to a wider context than that of an examination subject alone.

The task group was also of the opinion that some periods and events are over-emphasised in schools' schemes of work, and that this limits learners'

¹⁷ During 2007–11, for example, the assessments made by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 were moderated, and the moderators noted the variation in the examples submitted for the history of Wales. Some schools did not submit any evidence for this at all, although it is central to the programme of study for history at both Key Stage 2 and 3.

¹⁸ While an understanding of interpretations of history is one of the subject skills identified both in the programme of study for Key Stages 2 and 3, and an assessment objective at GCSE and AS/A level, it is a skill with which many teachers find difficulty, and they tend either to avoid it, or to interpret it as developing an understanding of bias.

experience of history. The original aim of studying some of the same periods (the early modern period, the nineteenth century and aspects of the twentieth century) at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 was to provide opportunities to deepen learners' knowledge and understanding as they matured intellectually. Key Stage 2 learners are expected to investigate ways of life in these periods, developing their understanding of the different characteristics of each period. They would then enquire more deeply into their political, economic, spiritual and social history at Key Stage 3. In practice, it appears that some popular topics, irrelevant to the original plan, such as the marriages of Henry VIII, are introduced at Key Stage 2, and then taught again at Key Stage 3, and this without always developing the appropriate depth.

There are examples of good and/or innovative practice, and of cooperation between schools and other agencies (such as museums, archives, libraries and the higher education sector). However there are far fewer examples of such practice being shared with other schools, of schools in the same area working together, and of the continuation and influence of innovative schemes. For example, the winners of the Welsh Heritage Schools' Initiative's annual competition provide evidence of good practice in the teaching of local and Welsh history, but there is little evidence of this being shared with other schools. Sharing resources and good practice with colleagues is a very effective way of raising standards and ensuring consistency of provision, as is clearly seen in countries such as Finland.

Opportunities to share good practice have declined in recent years. For many years CYDAG¹⁹ provided a forum for teachers in the Welsh-medium sector to meet regularly and share resources and practice, but recent developments in education have led to a reduction in the work and influence of CYDAG. Nothing similar exists for teachers in the English-medium sector since the Association of History Teachers in Wales ceased to function. The Humanities Advisory Panel was for many years a means of sharing information in this field. The members of this panel included the local authority advisors for geography and history, and representatives of the education services of heritage institutions such as the National Museum and Cadw. Following local authority changes, it ceased to function this year. The professional learning communities provide a new opportunity for teachers to work together, but it is too early to assess their contribution.

Several other reasons were put forward to explain these deficiencies. Some are practical, such as resources, while others are less easy to define, since they reflect common attitudes and beliefs. No new resources or programme of study can meet the need to change the attitude of some teachers and learners towards local and Welsh history, since this requires a broader change of attitudes. However, the popularity of television series such as *The Story of Wales* (BBC, 2012) and the articles in the *New History of Wales* in the *Western Mail* (2010–12; subsequently published in book form) suggests that innovative and attractive materials can capture the public imagination,

¹⁹ *Cymdeithas Ysgolion dros Addysg Gymraeg*: an organisation which promotes Welsh-medium education and supports the sharing of good practice and the development of teaching and learning materials through the medium of Welsh.

and in so doing might have a positive influence on education too. It should be noted that both these examples are available in English only²⁰, although the way in which extracts from *The Story of Wales* have been translated and made available on a permanent basis via the Education Wales iTunesU channel may well provide a model for the adaptation of future resources as they are developed.

Visits to historical sites can enrich and extend learners' experiences, and although good use is made of such visits at Key Stage 2, this is not as true at Key Stage 3. There are practical reasons for this, the cost of transport being one, but schools in Scotland integrate visits and the local environment into their school work, providing an example which should be considered in Wales. In order to make such visits effective, the heritage sector will need to work more closely with schools (see also the comments below under Resources).

Current difficulties in giving an appropriate emphasis to the history and histories of Wales

Resources

- The lack of appropriate resources, especially in Welsh, and lack of information about those which actually are available.
- The difficulty of finding resources for the history of Wales which are innovative in their teaching approach and up-to-date in content.
- The wealth of good, innovative and contemporary resources available for English history.
- The omni-presence of English history²¹ across all media, from quiz games to serious historical documentaries on British and international channels.

The influence of GCSE

Although the old history 'O' Level requirement to answer one question on Welsh history cannot be said to have ensured effective or coherent learning and teaching of Welsh history, the decision to remove that requirement for GCSE lowered the status of Welsh history in the eyes of teachers. The later decision to require the study of a percentage of British history reflects a wider concern about the effects of such changes in respect of British history. The requirements and expectations of the 16+ examinations have a considerable influence on Key Stage 3 teaching, and many teachers regard Key Stage 3 as a preparation for GCSE. If Welsh history does not have an appropriate emphasis at GCSE, it is not surprising that it is not given prominence at Key Stage 3.

GCSE approaches and priorities influence learning and teaching at Key Stage 3. The creation of a curriculum that integrated the history of Wales into the wider historical context would entail integrating an element of the history of Wales into the GCSE specification also.

²⁰ But selections from them are now available in Welsh: see <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/itunes-u/stori-cymru/id580130164>.

²¹ There are also many readily available resources to support the teaching of Nazi Germany, a very popular option at both GCSE and AS/A level.

Attitudes and practices in schools

- Schools' individualist ethos: every school is a little world of its own, with its own individual priorities, traditions, programmes and schemes of work. It is difficult to arrange meetings which are outside the work of the school itself or change a school's arrangements to meet those of another school or institution. In addition, schools in the same locality may be in competition, and this does not support cooperation.
- A general belief amongst history teachers that they need to pass on a certain body of information so that their learners have a secure foundation of historical knowledge. This may be defined in terms of their own experience and interests.
- There is an increasing emphasis in the primary sector on developing the historical skills which will enable learners to decide the focus of their enquiry, obtain the relevant information, and assess it. Consequently, there is less emphasis in the primary sector on formal schemes of work and pre-planned lessons.
- Lack of knowledge of Welsh history amongst teachers in general, due essentially to weaknesses in their own schooling, and the lack of opportunities to follow courses which integrate the history of Wales with that of Britain as a whole, Europe and the wider world.
- Lack of confidence in and enthusiasm for teaching Welsh history, arising in part from lack of information and experience, and the perception that local and Welsh history is narrow, and different from 'real' history, i.e. that of England, Europe and the wider world. This is reflected in the negative attitude of some university students of history towards the Welsh history options offered.
- Lack of teaching time for history in school, and of time for teachers to research/read/prepare. This is true of many subjects, of course, but there is a current tendency to conflate history and geography in order to follow a course in humanities.

General attitudes and beliefs

- The lack of a wide or popular circulation in Wales for those publications which deal with Welsh affairs, while the contrary is true for publications from England. There is also a general lack of publications: there is, for example, no national newspaper in Wales. The tendency in such English publications to refer to England as 'Britain' is misleading, and this is very clearly seen in recent discussions on proposed changes to the national curriculum in England. There are very few references to the other national curricula in Britain, while the English curriculum is all too often described as 'the national curriculum'.
- The way in which Welsh history is presented from an English perspective even by some heritage institutions in Wales. In this context, reference was made to the tendency to over-emphasise those aspects of the heritage of Wales, such as the castles, which reflect the perspective of the conquerors, rather than the experiences of the native Welsh. Efforts should be made to ensure that all heritage institutions in Wales provide appropriate interpretations, in both local

and national contexts, and in both English and Welsh. Where necessary, training should be provided to ensure staff are confident in interpreting the history, histories and cultures of Wales.

The programme of study

The task group agreed that the current programme of study gives explicit priority to the history of Wales in every period studied at Key Stages 2 and 3 (with the exception of the enquiry into recent history at the end of Key Stage 3). However, the evidence available to the panel suggests that, for a variety of reasons, not all schools meet the requirements (see above for more detail on this).

In addition, some periods which are key to an understanding of Welsh history are not included in the programme of study, for example:

- the period between AD 400 and 1000, when the Christian tradition of the saints developed, together with the early independent kingdoms of Wales
- the first half of the eighteenth century, when the Methodist Revival began, which did so much to form the nonconformist tradition of Wales.

During the consultation process the task group received several interesting and constructive suggestions for restructuring the range of the current programme of study. However, while it remains of the opinion that it would not be practical or desirable to consider including every aspect of every period in any programme of study, or expect teachers to start from the beginning again, it is of the opinion that the present programme of study should be restructured. A revised programme of study should build on the current programme, and develop from it. It should offer a choice of a variety of in-depth and line of development studies, which would support learning and teaching aspects of local and Welsh history which give appropriate emphasis to the wider British, European and world contexts. It would then be possible to include some themes suitable to specific areas of Wales, such as the development of the copper industry or maritime history.

However, the task group would wish to emphasise the importance of using current good practice. A revised programme of study should build on the best of what is already there, while addressing any perceived weaknesses. Curriculum change should be evolutionary, not revolutionary. The task group would not want to see teachers' good work being undervalued, nor the promising developments of the years following the establishment of the national curriculum being thrown aside. Sudden and revolutionary change would place a strain on the human and financial resources of schools at a time of economic stringency. The task group believes that a subject task group of the sort outlined above could work with teachers and learners to develop ways of teaching history which would reflect the best of what is currently available, and develop innovative methods of teaching that reflect the histories of a diverse and devolved twenty-first century Wales.

3. Does the teaching of history across all phases sufficiently take into account the latest research and the new resources available about the historical development of Wales from the earliest times to the twenty-first century?

The resources commissioned by the Government to support learning and teaching of history are available through the Welsh Books Council. Although representatives of the Council regularly visit every school in Wales, and the Council's catalogue is also available online, the task group's opinion is that only a minority of history teachers in every sector are aware of the resources they offer, both digitally and in print. Publishers in England have a much larger market, and consequently the resources to advertise their publications more widely and also to obtain publicity for them. The vast majority of these resources do not support the learning and teaching of Welsh history however.

Teachers and student teachers now mainly use websites, and some of these, such as the BBC website, provide them with information on programming on Wales and/or Welsh history which might introduce them to recent research. However the use made of these by teachers depends very largely on their personal interest in the subject, and not all the BBC's resources are available in Welsh, which limits their usefulness in Welsh-medium schools.

Many heritage institutions provide very high-quality resources which take into account the latest research, but these are not always intended for schools, nor are they always devised to meet the requirements of the Welsh curriculum. Some heritage bodies do not provide any specific educational resources, and there is a tendency to emphasise local history at the expense of the wider Welsh context, or to set this history in the context of the history of England.

At present, university teachers are being encouraged to strengthen their links with A level students, and participation in collaboration via the Hwb+ Learning Platform would be a means of doing so. It may also be possible to hold day schools for school and university teachers to cooperate in developing activities and resources for history which reflect the latest research. However, although part of the Research Evaluation Framework (REF) strategy is to strengthen the impact agenda (which includes engagement with institutions like schools) there are also other requirements on university teachers.

Although teachers were making considerable and increasing use of NGfL, the standard of these resources was variable. The current development of Hwb has immense potential to promote awareness and use of the latest research and new resources, and was warmly welcomed by the group. As a result of the scarcity of resources, the tendency has been to use old resources, which reinforce traditional stereotypes (e.g. the coal miner in his bath, with no reference to the work of his wife in the home, etc.).

Many of the factors noted in discussing the teaching of the history of Wales more generally (See Section 2) are also relevant here, and in particular the weaknesses in cooperation and sharing of good practice.

Although there are examples of successful cooperation on individual projects between research institutions (such as universities and museums) and schools, the task group is of the opinion that there is a lack of coordinated and continuous cooperation between the different sectors. This weakens the influence of the higher education and heritage sectors on the history taught in schools in general.

The programme *The Story of Wales*, and the series on Welsh history published by the Western Mail in recent years, provide a glimpse of the exciting and relevant research currently being carried out in Wales. But, perfectly naturally, there has been no guidance on the way in which this research might be used in schools, and there is no obvious way for researchers to find out whether their work is relevant to schools.

The task group believes that appointing a history committee for Wales would create a link between the research world and the classroom, and that Hwb+ offers an opportunity to present the fruits of this cooperation to teachers and learners across Wales in a medium which is both accessible and relevant.

Recommendations

- 1. A committee of history specialists should be established, to include representatives from every sector of education and relevant organisations such as museums. This committee would be responsible for:**
 - **promoting cooperation between schools and the sharing of good practice**
 - **developing benchmarks of good practice in history**
 - **quality-assuring the resources published on Hwb**
 - **recommending new resources to be developed.**
- 2. To support this group, a subject specific coordinator should be appointed to the Hwb team, funded directly by the Welsh Government. They would facilitate the work of the specialist committee and encourage collaboration at a national, regional and local level. They should also be charged with publishing a regular digital newsletter, bringing together new resources, events and research developments within the field of history. This approach may provide a model for other subject areas to drive forward collaboration in their fields.**
- 3. In the revision of the national curriculum, the programme of study should be structured so as to provide clear guidance on the relationship between local, Welsh, British, European and world history. The aim should be to provide a sound foundation for learners' historical understanding while expanding their horizons.**

4. Numerous, specific and diverse examples of schemes of work with a focus on local and Welsh history in its wider context should be developed for Key Stages 2 and 3. Once these have been quality-assured, they should be stored on Hwb and updated regularly.
5. A proportion of Welsh history should be an integrated and compulsory part of every History GCSE specification offered in Wales.
6. In reviewing the qualifications, consideration should be given to strengthening the element of history in the Welsh Baccalaureate.
7. Access to the online collaboration space provided by Hwb+ should be extended to the higher education sector, and to heritage organisations such as the National Library of Wales, the National Museum of Wales, CADW, the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales and the county archives and other organisations through CyMAL.
8. Certain questions/themes and/or topics should be selected for development on Hwb+ so that the higher education and heritage sectors work with teachers to develop innovative resources based on the latest research in formats useful to teachers.
9. Those materials already produced where copyright is held by the Welsh Government should be digitised and made available via Hwb.
10. Those heritage institutions which are directly funded by the Welsh Government (i.e. Cadw, the Royal Commission, the National Museum and the National Library) should be required to adopt education policies which show clearly how they intend to contribute positively to the success of the national curriculum and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig.
11. Government-funded heritage organisations should be strongly encouraged to provide easy access for schools to the materials they develop, in both Welsh and English, so they can be used in the classroom setting.
12. All such resources should emphasise the provisional nature of history and the diversity of experience in all periods. Where appropriate, it should help learners to contrast and compare the experiences of different groups of people in all periods.

*'A nation is spiritually poor when it is cut off from its past.'*²²

²² David Thomas, *Hen Longau Sir Gaernarfon* (2nd edition, Llanrwst, 2005); quoted by Robin Evans, *Merched a'r Môr*, chapter 8, page 1. Author's translation.

Appendix 1: Members of the task and finish group

Dr Elin Jones (Chair)
Paul Nolan, Education advisor (Deputy Chair)
Professor Angela John
David Stacey, Olchfa Comprehensive School, Swansea
Dr Martin Johnes, Swansea University
Dr. Sian Rhiannon Williams, Cardiff Metropolitan University
Dr Huw Griffiths, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Myrddin, Carmarthenshire
Dr Stephanie Ward, Cardiff University
Nicola Thomas, Cornist Park County Primary School, Flintshire
William Rogers, Queen Street Primary School, Blaenau Gwent
Nia Huw, Ysgol Gynradd Llangeitho, Ceredigion
Nia Williams, Educational coordinator, Amgueddfa Genedlaethol
Cymru/National Museum of Wales
Frank Olding, Heritage officer, Blaenau Gwent local authority
John Dilwyn Williams, Archifdy Gwynedd

The group met on November 5, February 6, April 9, May 15, and on July 1 and 19. They also regularly communicated via e-mail while working on the two versions of the report (interim and final), the questionnaire and the responses received during the consultation period (April 25–June 21).

Appendix 2: The consultation process

The interim report was published on the **Welsh Government website** on April 25, together with a questionnaire asking for comments on each of its recommendations. Over 220 responses were received. Over 80 per cent of these supported the report and the recommendations, although there was less support for the recommendations on appointing 'Champions' and including a compulsory element of history in the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Over 40 individuals and institutions wrote **letters** in response to the consultation, and/or making relevant comments about the Cwricwlwm Cymreig and/or history. Once again, a substantial majority supported the report and its recommendations, but some expressed reservations about appointing 'Champions' and including a compulsory element of history in the Welsh Baccalaureate. Several respondents argued for establishing a new national curriculum for Wales which would take Wales as its starting point, but have an international perspective. Some of these criticised the report for its weak recommendations and ambiguous comments on this issue.

The Welsh Government also received a **petition**, with 597 signatures, calling for the history of Wales to be compulsory for all pupils from 7 years of age onwards.

Two **public meetings** were held, one in Wrexham (June 12) and one in Carmarthen (June 13) 44 people attended these. A number of aspects of the report and its recommendations were discussed, and received largely positive comments, although some teachers present expressed concerns about the recommendations regarding GCSE and the Welsh Baccalaureate. Others present called for more positive recommendations regarding a new curriculum for Wales.

Dr Martin Johnes published an **article** on the website *Click on Wales*, outlining some of the arguments in the report, and this received 14 responses. Eight of these were broadly supportive, and three very critical, expressing concerns about the proposed compulsory element of Welsh history at GCSE, and about the practicality of some of the recommendations. A **twitter discussion** was also held on AddCym, arranged by Dave Stacey, which included a variety of comments.

Articles about the report and consultation process were also published in the **press**, including the *Western Mail* and *Golwg*. These articles stimulated some correspondence in the press, and there was also some discussion of the report on Radio Wales.

The Chair of the group visited 10 **public libraries** during the consultation period, namely Llandrindod, Welshpool, Aberystwyth, Llangefni, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Chepstow, Blaenafon, Ystrad Mynach, Haverfordwest and Townhill (Swansea). The libraries advertised her visit in advance, and members of the public thus had an opportunity to discuss the report and its recommendations

with her. Some of the comments made during these discussions are to be found in Appendix 3.

The Chair made a presentation on the report to:

- The South Wales Heritage Forum (July 4)
- The *Educating the Nation(s)* conference organised by the Politics Department of Huddersfield University (July 6)
- The *Holding a Mirror to Michael Gove* conference organised by the History Teacher Educators' Network, and held at the Institute for Educational Research, London (July 16–7)

While preparing the report, and as part of the consultation process on it, the Chair also met the following **individuals**:

- Ann Keane and Meilyr Rowlands, Estyn
- Alun Morgan, former History inspector, Estyn
- Dr Kevin Smith, Cardiff University
- Dr Glenn Jordan, Director of the Butetown History and Arts Centre
- Robin Williams, President of the Oxford House Industrial History Society, Risca

and held telephone conversations with:

- Gareth Pierce, Chief Executive of the Welsh Joint Education Committee
- Jerome Freeman, Chair of the Primary Committee of the Historical Association.

Appendix 3: Quotations

Comments made by the public, during the informal library consultations

The Cwricwlwm Cymreig

"I suppose it's about learning Welsh, is it?"

"It's just for the Welsh schools, isn't it?"

"Young people need to have a full Welsh perspective on economics and politics to explain the world we live in... If the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is just restricted to history, then Wales is downgraded to the past."

History

"I want my children to know about the important things... the wars... the Holocaust... things like that."

"Dim ond yn cofio gwneud y rhyfeloedd yn yr uwchradd – a'r *Treaty of Versailles*: roedd hwnnw'n dod ian bob tro." ("I only remember doing the wars in secondary – and the Treaty of Versailles: that came up all the time.")

"Young people need to know about the history of the place they live in, if they're going to have any respect for it. And that will give them more self-respect and a more positive outlook on the future, if they can take a pride in their past."

"I love Welsh history, but everything I know about it I learnt *after* I left school. I've had to do it all myself, and I think that's wrong."

"I'm ashamed I don't know enough about the history of my own country."

"I liked history in school, until I started GCSE. Then we spent a whole term on the Plains Indians, and nobody ever told me why. I gave it up at Christmas."